



# *Park & Recreation Commission*

Department of Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities  
1108 Jefferson Street  
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

June 25, 2021

Honorable Mayor and members of City Council  
City of Alexandria  
301 King Street  
Alexandria, VA 22314

Re: Like-kind Replacement of the Minnie Howard Athletic field

Dear Mayor Wilson and members of City Council,

I write you on behalf of the Park and Recreation Commission and ask that you consider requesting ACPS staff work with the Department of Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities (RPCA) to identify opportunities to improve athletic fields on ACPS property to compensate for the impending loss of the lighted synthetic turf athletic field on the Minnie Howard Campus. Site work related to construction of a new school on this site is scheduled to begin in the spring of 2021 and will displace approximately 200 annual community uses (athletic practices, games and rentals – calendar year 2019) on that field alone.

Compounding the issue of losing a field is the delayed delivery of the turf field at the Patrick Henry Elementary School and Recreation Center, and the small turf field at Douglas MacArthur Elementary School resulting from the construction of the new Douglas MacArthur Elementary School. For a broader view of the issue please see the attached chart which estimates how school construction projects will impact athletic field usage over the next 10 years. As you know, the public process can be time consuming, so I implore you to act as quickly as your schedule allows, so staff can identify appropriate sites where improvements can be made to increase usability and absorb some of the lost field time. Some examples may include:

- Install Athletic Lights at the Francis C. Hammond synthetic Turf Field when recarpeting is planned in 2024;
- Invest in improvements to the Francis C. Hammond Lower Field (Death Valley) such as synthetic turf and athletic lights;
- Install Athletic Lights at Jefferson Houston synthetic Turf Field; and
- ACPS commit to formally releasing the Simpson Park rectangular athletic field site as a placeholder for a future potential school site.

Just as there is pressure on ACPS facilities with a growing student population in aging facilities, similar pressure is being applied to City athletic fields and parks. Implementing a long-term athletic field improvement strategy will assist in addressing our recreation needs by simultaneously taking into account budget, timing and availability which can be integrated into the 10-year CIP. To achieve this goal, RPCA is

finalizing a 10-year athletic field implementation strategy and anticipates the initial draft to be released in July.

Part of a long-term strategy may include installing conduit at GW and Hammond in preparation for adding field lights, which could save hundreds of thousands of dollars, and avoid costly downtime due to construction disruptions. Another cost saving measure may include applying for permits to install lights and turf at all appropriate fields on ACPS and City fields at one time.

Because ACPS must be the SUP applicant for certain improvements on their school sites, it may streamline efforts to have RPCA act as a surrogate applicant. The Joint City-Schools Facility Investment Task Force has discussed a framework to facilitate these efforts by using the capability delivery model developed by its Capital Planning and Implementation Subcommittee.

While the Minnie Howard reconstruction plan includes an athletic field, final delivery could be a minimum of four years once work begins. With this concern in mind, we ask that in your discussion you consider prioritizing the like-kind replacement of this athletic field and facilitate the implementation of a long-term athletic field improvement strategy.

We look forward to continue to work with you to ensure that the recreation needs of our city are appropriately addressed.

Sincerely,



Steve Beggs  
Vice Chair, Park and Recreation Commission

cc: Park & Recreation Commission members  
Mark Jinks, City Manager  
Debra Collins, Deputy City Manager  
James Spengler, Director, Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities  
Jack Browand, Acting Deputy Director, Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities

Attachment: Anticipated Field Closures Calendar Year 2021-2025

**Anticipated Field Closures by Six Month Timeframe 2021-2025 (Calendar)**

	2021 July-Dec	2022 Jan-June	2022 July-Dec	2023 Jan-June	2023 July-Dec	2024 Jan-June	2024 July-Dec	2025 Jan-June	2025 July-Dec
Ben Brenman Rectangular Recarpeting									
Armistead L. Boothe SB Conversion									
MacArthur Rectangular (ACPS)									
Patrick Henry Multi-Use Field (ACPS)									
Joseph Hensley Park Phase I									
Simpson Park Diamond Fields									
GW Rectangular Conversion (ACPS)									
Witter Rectangular Recarpeting									
Hammond Recarpeting (ACPS)									
Stevenson Park Diamond									
Four Mile Run Park Rectangular									
Minnie Howard (ACPS)									
J. Houston Rectangular Recarpeting (ACPS)									